

Subj: **The letter I said I'd send....use if it fits what you need, Sparky.**
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From: RODNEYBUCHANAN@msn.com
To: sparkyvaubel@cs.com
CC: Miguelmauricio@hotmail.com
Received from Internet: [click here for more information](#)

For many years I said, "No" to housing a Rotary Exchange Student. I had many excuses. "No, I need to get my own kids raised." "No, I don't think so." "No, how would we communicate?"

With less than two weeks before Miguel arrived from Brazil, he only had his last two host families, but no one to take him home from airport. A Rotarian friend approached me with Miguel's biography in hand. He told me that he himself had been an exchange student to Germany and what a difference it made in his life. How he was still in contact with his German Mom even after 40 years. His most interesting comment was, "When I actually dreamed in German, I was confident that I knew the language."

I looked over the biography, prayed about it and began to sense I already knew this boy just a bit. I wasn't sure why, and even wondered out loud to my husband the day before we left for the airport! But the moment Miguel came into view, I didn't wonder again. I explained it to friends that it was like adopting an overseas child. I loved him the minute I saw him and accepted him as my own.

That was a year ago. Even though he did go on to enjoy two other host families, we were in a small town, so I stayed in contact with him. He was a competitive swimmer, so I became the Swim Mom. We were blessed to have him come back "home" for the last two weeks and help him get prepared to leave and take him to the airport. It was harder than letting my own children leave home!

He gained another family across the world. We gained a new son, much new information about Brazil, enough laughs and good times to last a lifetime, great joy in showing Miguel our beautiful State and a few others, too. He also enjoyed snow for the first time, learning to snow and water ski, a family trip to Chicago, shopping, and the list goes on.

If I'd have continued to say, "No," my life would be far less full. My last year would have been normal I suppose and I would have kept up on all my responsibilities, but now I look back on a very rich, rewarding year. A very different year. A year that I will remember my entire life.

I'm very glad I finally said, "Yes."

Caroline Buchanan